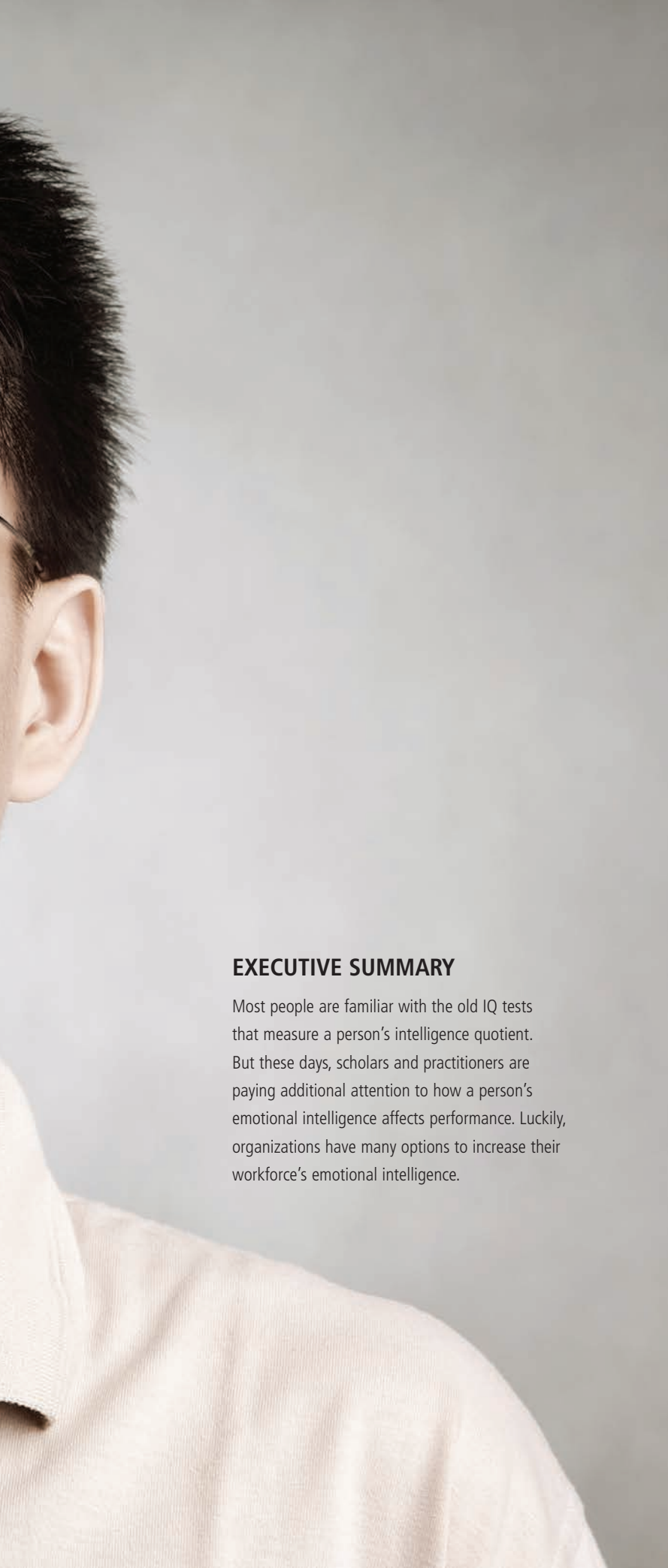




Improving emotional intelligence

BY GOLNAZ SADRI



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Most people are familiar with the old IQ tests that measure a person's intelligence quotient. But these days, scholars and practitioners are paying additional attention to how a person's emotional intelligence affects performance. Luckily, organizations have many options to increase their workforce's emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence may be more important than intellectual intelligence.

Most of us are familiar with the use of intelligence tests for predicting behaviors such as educational achievement and job performance. Intelligence tests are standardized instruments designed to measure IQ (intelligence quotient). Recently, the concept of emotional intelligence has generated interest, with some authors suggesting that emotional intelligence (EI) may be more important than intellectual intelligence in determining success in jobs with a heavy interpersonal component such as management, sales and leadership.

EI relates to four dimensions of skills and behaviors: a person's ability to understand his or her own behavior, a person's ability to regulate his or her own behavior, a person's ability to understand other people's behavior and a person's ability to regulate other people's behavior. This article reviews the literature on the concept of EI and makes some recommendations about how to develop the EI of managers and leaders. The article is divided into four sections: the first section examines the two most cited models of EI; the second section reviews research evidence linking EI with management performance; the third section looks at whether EI responds to training; and the fourth section gives suggestions for developing EI.

EI models

J.D. Mayer, P. Salovey and D.R. Caruso in *Psychological Inquiry* define emotional intelligence as "the capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions to enhance thinking. It includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth."

Their model for EI, which has been widely accepted by the academic community, consists of four levels of emotional abilities. The most basic level is the ability to perceive emotion

and includes skills such as recognizing facial expressions in others and interpreting what those expressions mean. The second level is the ability to use emotion to facilitate thought and includes skills such as weighing conflicting emotions against each other to determine how one should react. The third level, understanding emotion, involves labeling emotions and understanding the relationships associated with shifts in emotion. The fourth level is the ability to manage emotion within oneself and others. This can include, for example, calming down after becoming angry or being able to alleviate the anxiety of another person. This model is measured through the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT), a self-report measure.

In his book *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman defines EI as “abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one’s moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope.” Goleman’s model has gained more attention from the nonacademic community.

This model of EI consists of five skill areas, three of which relate to personal competence and two of which relate to social competence. The personal competencies include self-awareness (awareness of one’s inner feelings, preferences, capabilities and intuitions); self-regulation (the ability to manage one’s inner feelings, impulses and capabilities); and motivation (the ability to direct one’s emotions toward goal attainment). The social competencies include empathy (the ability to be aware of the feelings, needs and concerns of others); and social skills (the ability to direct the behavior of others toward goal attainment). Two measurement tools are based on Goleman’s model: the Emotional Competency Inventory (ECI) and the Emotional and Social Competency Inventory (ESCI).

EI and management performance

A number of authors and researchers argue that EI is important for effective management and leadership and that EI shows a relationship with performance beyond intellectual ability and personality factors. There is evidence that managers high in EI are able to perceive, evaluate, anticipate and manage emotions in a way that enables them to work with and motivate their subordinates. Research has shown that a manager’s or team leader’s EI helps motivate the team and builds supportive relationships among team members.

R.K. Cooper in *Training and Development* identifies a number of high profile business leaders who demonstrate what he refers to as the “four cornerstones” of EI: emotional literacy, emotional fitness, emotional depth and emotional alchemy. A study of 350 university students participating in 108 teams found that teams consisting of members higher in EI performed better than teams with members lower in EI. This study found that EI affected the type of conflict strategies adopted. Those higher in EI were more likely to use collaboration when resolving conflicts at the individual and team level.

In a study comparing 51 high potential managers with 51 regular managers, the EI subscales of assertiveness, independence, optimism, flexibility and social responsibility separated the high potential managers from managers performing at an average level. Another study found that employees were more creative when their team leaders possessed self-control against criticism and were more empathetic.

There is a relationship between EI and transformational leadership. In one study, managers with higher self-reported ratings of EI were rated as more transformational by their subordinates. Subordinates rated managers with higher self-reported ratings of EI as showing more idealized influence, inspirational motivation and individu-

alized consideration.

The studies described here show that EI relates to managerial effectiveness. In a study of 40 managers participating in a leadership development center, M. Higgs and P. Aitken in the *Journal of Managerial Psychology* found EI to be related to a number of aspects of leadership, and they suggest that EI is likely to prove a good predictor of leadership potential.

As such, assessment centers and other selection procedures targeted at selecting effective managers and leaders will benefit by including EI as one of the selection criteria.

Self-reported measures of EI can be used to determine the level of a person’s EI. In addition, observation of participant behavior in the various interpersonal and group activities included as part of an assessment center is a valuable source of information about someone’s EI.

Training. It works

Evidence shows that a person’s EI can be improved through training and development. For example, American Express financial advisors developed an emotional competence training program in the early 1990s. The study compared the performance of financial advisors who worked under managers that received emotional competence training against those who worked under managers that did not receive the training. P. Smith at the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations reports that advisors who worked for a trained manager were able to grow their businesses at a rate of 18.1 percent over 15 months. This compares favorably to the 16.2 percent growth rate for advisors who worked under a manager who did not benefit from EI training.

R. Kelley and J. Caplan in *Harvard Business Review* describe a study at Bell Labs where nine nonintellectual strategies that differentiated star performers from average performers were identified. The nine strat-

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egies included: taking initiative, networking, self-management, teamwork effectiveness, leadership, followership, perspective, show-and-tell and organizational savvy. Bell Labs developed a program that focused on teaching these skills to engineering employees. Kelley and Caplan note that at the time their article was written, 600 engineers had participated in this program, which led to an increase in worker productivity (about 25 percent after one year) and an improved organizational climate.

K.S. Groves, M.P. McEnrue and W. Shen in the *Journal of Management Development* found that a group of 135 employed business students who underwent an 11-week EI training program showed significant gains in EI, while a control group showed no pre-test, post-test differences. These studies show that people are able to develop their EI, and much of the executive coaching currently being performed by organizations focuses on developing people's interpersonal and social skills.

A plethora of choices

Management development programs are popular and cost organizations billions of dollars annually. Such programs take a variety of approaches. S.J. Allen and N.S. Hartman in *S.A.M. Advanced Management Journal* identify 27 approaches to training managers and leaders: group reflection, individual reflection, service learning, outdoor management development, low ropes course, team building, fellowships, sabbaticals, developmental relationships, networking with senior executives, degree programs, self-paced learning, classroom-based learning, e-learning, executive coaching, instruments, assessment centers, 360 degree feedback, just-in-time training, developmental assignments, simulations, games, personal development plans, action learning, job enrichment, job enlargement and job rotation. A number of these approaches can help organizations

develop their employees' EI.

Self-awareness is developed by getting participants to look at themselves. Of the activities identified by Allen and Hartman, those most pertinent to developing self-awareness include individual reflection, group reflection, executive coaching, instruments, simulations, personal development plans, low ropes course, team building, fellowships, sabbaticals, assessment centers, developmental assignments, simulations, job enrichment and job enlargement.

Individual reflection focuses on a person's goals, past experiences and personal mission and is captured through activities like keeping a journal of work activities, challenges and responses. Group reflection typically occurs after a team building activity. Participants discuss the pattern of events during the exercise and identify strategies for improvement. Executive coaching is an individualized method of learning where a coach works with a client in a one-to-one relationship to assist in accomplishing behavioral improvements back at the workplace.

Instruments are a popular vehicle for raising self-awareness. A combination of self-reports and 360 degree instruments is used often as part of management development programs. A number of measurement tools have been developed to measure EI, including the Social Competency Inventory and the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test mentioned earlier. But EI training programs will increase their benefits by including any measures that help raise awareness about different dimensions of the self. While the specific instrument used may vary, it is important to pay particular attention to the psychometric properties of each instrument to ensure that the measure adopted is reliable, valid and will strengthen a training and development program.

Simulations can focus on a number of aspects of behavior, such as communication or conflict resolution. Such

exercises provide employees the opportunity to practice these skills in a nonthreatening environment and then reflect on how effectively they handled the situation and whether they would change their approach to similar situations in the future. Low ropes courses typically are outdoor activities that present participants with developmental scenarios, providing opportunities after completion to reflect on how well participants handled the challenges presented to them.

Fellowships require participants to engage in a focused project and can help managers identify and refine their particular interests and passions. Sabbaticals, like fellowships, provide participants with time to focus on projects of particular interest to them and help redefine and develop a person's interests, skills and priorities. Assessment centers involve participants in a variety of activities, including group activities, paired simulations and role playing exercises, and trained observers give participants feedback about their strengths and weaknesses. Feedback of this nature can be a valuable vehicle for developing self-awareness. Finally, job enrichment (adding tasks of greater responsibility to a person's job) and job enlargement (adding tasks of equal difficulty to a person's job) can help develop self-awareness when, after several weeks, the job incumbent reflects on the experience and on how well she is doing.

Self-regulation requires that a person observe his behavior and make changes where necessary. Of the activities identified by Allen and Hartman, those most likely to enhance self-regulation include self-paced learning, executive coaching, 360 degree feedback, developmental assignments, games, personal development plans and action learning.

Self-paced learning is an individualized form of learning in which the participant completes a book, workbook or recorded material at her own pace. Having a coach work with

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a client on a one-to-one basis to raise awareness of how the client's behavior affects the workplace is a useful tool in developing self-regulation. Feedback, both self-generated as well as 360 degree, assists with self-regulation because it identifies the strengths and pitfalls of the individual's particular style and identifies next steps in managing behavior. Feedback from others helps develop self-regulation if measurements are taken twice or more, particularly if the manager is given opportunities in the interim to change his behavior.

Developmental assignments are structured so that they challenge individuals and provide them an opportunity to learn. Personal development plans involve the individual in developing and taking responsibility for her training and development. This might include looking at behaviors or asking people to reconnect with their inner values, talents and passions.

To develop self-regulation, a person sets behavior-oriented goals and then monitors progress toward these goals.

Awareness of others can be developed through group reflection, service learning, team building, developmental relationships, networking with senior executives, classroom-based training and job rotation.

Group reflection typically involves a team simulation exercise, ranging from simple paper and pencil activities to more elaborate outdoor training, paired with group reflection at the completion of the team simulation. These drills help build awareness of others and how one's behavior affects the group. One simple way to generate feedback is through a round-robin exercise where each group member asks the other group members for feedback on specific aspects of her behavior. Think of having the group answer questions like this: Do you see me as a person who dominates the group discussion?

Service learning involves engagement in activities that target individual and community needs. This

is a very good way to raise awareness about other people with diverse backgrounds and needs. The focus of team building is to facilitate cooperation among team members and helps team members set goals and priorities, examine the way they conduct their work and how they interact. Developmental relationships aim to provide individuals with the support they need to meet their developmental needs. Managers can help raise their awareness of others by taking on the senior role in the developmental relationship. Networking with senior executives provides exposure to other people and can help managers understand different work styles and preferences.

Classroom-based training typically lasts from three to five days and also can assist in raising awareness of others. For this, training content should be geared toward relevant topics, such as the differences between individuals. Finally, job rotation and cross-training can increase awareness of other people's jobs, skill sets and challenges.

Regulating the behavior of others relies on collaborative goal-setting and using effective social skills to motivate and guide subordinates toward goal accomplishment. Of the activities identified by Allen and Hartman, those that contribute best to developing skills at regulating others are outdoor management development, low ropes courses, team building, developmental relationships, action learning and group simulations.

Outdoor management development simulations get managers to examine the strengths and weaknesses of their current approach to leading others. Similar benefits accrue from low ropes courses, after which managers are asked to examine and reflect on their leadership.

Team building involves members working cooperatively to analyze the task aspect of their work as well as the interpersonal processes occurring within the group. These activities help

managers develop skills to motivate and guide others. Developmental relationships may be formal or informal, but they help provide the target individual with information, support and challenges. Again, these relationships can help managers develop skills at regulating the work of others if the manager takes on the senior role in the developmental relationship. Action learning engages participants in concrete experience and subsequent reflection on that experience with the objective of developing ways to overcome potential challenges existing within the workplace. Group simulations mirror the ways managers work with others and can help develop their skills at managing and working with people.

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Picking and choosing

Organizations that aim to develop the EI of their managers should not attempt to improve all four EI competencies – self-awareness, self-regulation, awareness of others and regulation of others – in the same training program. Instead, focus on developing one or more as stand-alone competencies and provide training to participants who lack the requisite skills on an as-needed basis.

For example, the top training priority for one manager might be developing self-awareness, for another it may be improving self-regulation, for a third, developing awareness of others, while for a fourth, the initial focus for training might be developing skills for motivating and regulating others. The level of priority will depend on an organization's assessment of each manager's EI prior to the training program. ♦

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